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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000239

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, S/CT, INR/EU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2020
TAGS: PTER, MOPS, TU
SUBJECT: ALLEGED PKK WARNING TO U.S. AGAINST PROVIDING UAVS
TO TURKEY

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Anthony Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) In comments responding to a question regarding the visit to Ankara by Secretary Gates on February 6 and USF-I Commanding General Odierno on February 3, the leader of the terrorist PKK reportedly issued a warning to the U.S., apparently against providing Turkey with an armed UAV capability. According to a press interview posted on February 8 by the Firat New Agency (a PKK media outlet),

PKK leader Murat Karayilan singled out the provision of "special assassination aircraft" as a step that the PKK would view as the U.S. becoming directly involved in the conflict. He noted that, "Currently, Turkey does not have such capability. Since the U.S. will provide these aircraft for the massacre to be carried out by those planes, not Turkey but the U.S. will be responsible." He further stated that, "If the U.S. gives these aircraft to Turkey and if (PKK members) are hit by them, then "(the PKK) will hold the U.S. responsible" and that the PKK will "review the policy that (it has) been pursuing toward the U.S. until now." The interview has been widely reported in Turkish media outlets and has been interpreted as Karayilan's "instructions to PKK administrators" and a threat to the U.S.

2. (S) Para. 5 below contains an unofficial Embassy translation of key excerpts from the February 8 interview on the Firat News Agency (FNA) website. Turkish media reporting, apparently based on the FNA interview, interpreted the statement as a threat to the United States.

3. (C) On February 12, the Embassy Emergency Action Committee met to discuss this and other potential threats to American citizens. The Committee decided that this statement was likely made as a political response to visits to Ankara in the past week by SecDef and USF-I CG Odierno, where strong statements of U.S. solidarity with Turkey's fight against the PKK caught the attention of the press. The Committee noted that similar indirect threats had been made in both November 2007 and Spring 2008 and that at this point, no action was required given Mission's already heightened security posture.

4. (C) Comment: Because of the long-standing Turkish interest in recruiting the U.S. into the fight against the PKK, Turkish press reports may be inclined to exaggerate the threat against us. A careful reading of the PKK instructions as reported by the media here suggests a warning rather than a direct threat. That said, if the organization does feel increasing pressure over the next several months and if the Turkish military strikes against PKK targets become increasingly effective, its threat against us may become more explicit.

5. (SBU) Begin text of informal translation of key excerpts of the February 8 Firat News Agency interview with Karayilan:

"Question: Ray Odierno, Commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq,

visited Turkey. Later Secretary of Defense Gates too arrived for the NATO meeting in Istanbul. Gates received high-level reception in Ankara by the President and the Prime Minister of Turkey. He had meetings at the Ministry of National Defense and during those talks, Turkey asked for support and new technical arms in the fight against the PKK. Would you comment?"

"Answer: If the U.S. genuinely wants to develop a solution to problems in the region and if it is looking for stability in the Middle East, then it should first adopt a straight approach to the Kurdish issue. It is a double standard to regard the southern Kurds as friends and support violence against the freedom cause of the northern Kurds. It is not a moral policy...

Despite all these facts, it is not right for the U.S. to support Turkey's violent policy... Eleven years ago, our leader was taken hostage by an international ploy led by the U.S. and given to Turkey. The goal was to eliminate our movement...

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Now Turkey again wants new technical (equipment) from the U.S. According to the media, there is an agreement between Turkey and the U.S. on this issue. PM Erdogan while meeting with Gates referred to that agreement and asked for new technical assistance... According to that agreement, the American aircraft on surveillance flights over Kurdistan skies are loaded/armed. This means as they determined the target, they have the ability to fire on them immediately. Erdogan asked for those 'assassination arms' from Gates...

What will he do with them? He will carry out assassinations against our prominent administrators and eliminate them... This proves that the democratic initiative is demagogy and a lie...

Until now, the U.S. always supported the Turkish state's violent policy. By supporting this violent policy, the U.S. has been an accomplice in the shedding of blood of the Kurdish people... We want to emphasize that the U.S. finally should end being an accomplice. Now it is conducting surveillance activity. It provides arms, ammunition and technical support. Above all this, if it also provides to Turkey special assassination aircraft,

then this would mean that the U.S. directly is involved in this war...

If the U.S. gives these aircraft to Turkey and if Turkey with these aircraft hits the Kurdish freedom fighters then the U.S. will be directly responsible for this. Currently Turkey does not have such capability. Since the U.S. will provide these aircraft for the massacre to be carried out by those planes, not Turkey but the U.S. will be responsible. We will hold the U.S. responsible. For this reason, I am again appealing to the U.S. to give up these policies and not to be hostile toward the Kurdish people and their freedom movement.

The U.S. for the sake of using Turkey for its interests in the Middle East, should not sacrifice the Kurdish people. This is inhumane... Despite our good will and appeals, if the U.S. insists on this policy and for its own interest gives all technical equipment to Turkey for carrying out massacres, then in response, it should be known that we will be put in a position to review the policy that we have been pursuing toward the U.S. until now."

End Text of informal translation.
Jeffrey

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